

## *Our Lady of Lourdes*

Christmas

December 25, 2009

Readings:

Isaiah 9:1-6

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:15-20

Fr. Bob

Shepherds in first century Palestine had to watch their flocks around the clock for fear of thieves and wolves. This didn't leave much time for temple attendance. They prayed where they were, as they were. These shepherds, however, were in the right place at the right time to hear the first Christmas message. Maybe they had the right disposition too. Sometimes, publicly religious people can sound as though they know the mind of God better than God does! It's a trap we need to avoid and Christmas helps us do it. It proves that no one knows for sure what to expect from God. No one has the insight to know how he is going to behave. No one predicted the way God would send us a savior. No one knew the day or the hour of God's coming. No one foresaw that God would be born a homeless person. No one imagined that the first witnesses to the birth would be shepherds from nearby fields. While some waited for a mercenary to overthrow the Romans, others held their breath for the procession of a heavenly king. The love of God, however, took flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, and came to us as a poor, defenseless baby.

That's our God, not bound by our precepts or expectations but still honoring the promises made to our ancestors, in the most surprising of ways. And Christmas provides us with the most tender images of our God, one who needs to be nurtured, protected and held tight. It's not a bad metaphor for our Christian faith either. If Christmas means anything to us then it's not an annual religious outing or something to fill in time on a public holiday. It's a moveable feast which we celebrate every time we do something just, loving, or peaceful. That's why we gather here for the Eucharist each week: to be nurtured, fed, protected, and held in God's embrace, if only for a while, so that we find the courage and strength to go out from here, confront the wolves and thieves of our own day and be in the right place at the right time for God to find us. As a result of that first Christmas, Christ wants to nurture a people who by their lives will change the world for the better, for all people everywhere.

Our Gospel gives us our legacy as we celebrate this feast when we are told, "And the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." May we be worthy of this God who continues to live with us, to be a part of our lives and part of our world. May we be worthy of the word "Christian" that was conferred on us at baptism. May we be worthy of the God whose love came down from the heavens, and made his dwelling place with his people.